

SMOKING

Careless disposal of smoking materials and cigarettes is the leading cause of fatal residential fires in the United States. According to the National Fire Protection Association, approximately 250,000 house fires per year are caused by careless disposal of cigarettes or other smoking materials. Nearly 2,000 people tragically and needlessly lose their lives in these fires.

Most smoking fires start in the bedroom, living room or den when cigarettes or burning embers are dropped on upholstered furniture, bedding or trash.

By being alert to the fire hazards of smoking and taking safety precautions, a fire disaster can be prevented.

Not allowing smoking in the home is the safest way. If this alternative will not work for you, keep plenty of ashtrays on hand for smokers. Large, deep ashtrays are the safest kind to use because there is less risk of a cigarette falling out and starting a fire.

When cleaning ashtrays, fill them with water - then empty them in the trashcan. Even when a cigarette appears to be extinguished, there is still a chance that it may be smoldering. If you empty an ashtray in a wastebasket containing paper or other combustibles without first wetting it down, the result could be a fire. Play it safe and soak cigarette butts before disposing them. Check under cushions for smoldering embers. A burning cigarette can smolder between the cushions of upholstered furniture and go unnoticed for as long as five hours! Before you leave a room where people have been smoking, carefully check between sofa and chair crevices and under cushions. Check for embers, cigarette butts or matches. Make sure they have not been smoldering and remove them at once.

Watch other people who are smoking. Careless smokers can set themselves and the house on fire. Be especially watchful of any smoker who is drinking alcohol or is sick in bed and may be smoking.

Never smoke in bed. Even people who don't feel tired can doze off. Smoldering bedclothes produce smoke and toxic gases or flames. A mattress can give off as many as 11 different gases when it burns. If you think you'll wake up if the bed catches fire, you're dead wrong. Those gases will put you into a deep sleep, maybe forever.

Help to protect elderly and handicapped smokers. When a person's physical ability is impaired, there is a greater chance of clothing catching fire from a cigarette. Keep a watchful eye on elderly and handicapped persons who smoke, making sure they use deep ashtrays.

Keep matches and cigarette lighters away from children. Matches and lighters are tools for adults only. Store them up high where young children can't reach them. Teach kids to give any matches or lighters they find to adults.